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ABSTRACT

This short survey begins with a definition of the Mexican American and some of the questions asked by the general public about his culture and aims. It outlines the history of the United States' involvement with Mexico and explains the experience of the Mexican Americans after the end of the Mexican War in 1848. Their ethnic origins and the rich cultural backgrounds of both Mexico and Spain are described, as well as the Spanish settlement of the Southwest and California. The widespread disregard for the provisions of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which called for the free enjoyment of liberty, property, and religion, and the U.S. settlement of the West in the goldrush led to their being downgraded as citizens by means of new land registry laws and legal systems, the requirement of literacy in English as a voting qualification, and an Anglo-dominated school system. The employment of immigrant day-laborers along the border and the prevelance of Spanish-language newspapers, movies, and radio programs have hindered the equal acceptance of Mexican Americans. The present Chicano movement is doing much to advance the recognition of their cultural values and to encourage a movement toward social justice, but it is still uncertain whether they will ultimately choose assimilation or biculturalism. (MBM)

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Mexican Americans: a brief look at their history

by Julian Nava

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Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith
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About the Author

Dr. Julian Nava was born in Los Angeles but, like many Mexican Americans, was raised in the *barrio* (the Mexican section of that city). He attended the public schools in Los Angeles and spent the summers picking fruit with his family as well as the other families living in the *barrio*. But it was not until he joined the U. S. Navy that his eyes were opened to the world outside.

After completing his military service, he began to attend the new junior college located on the borderline which separated the *barrio* from Anglo neighborhoods. And as he adapted to college life and became more involved with education, he dreamed of pursuing his school career even further.

The dream was realized when, after graduation from East Los Angeles Junior College, he went on to Pomona College and from there to Harvard University, where he obtained his Masters and Doctorate in History. He next taught in Spanish in Puerto Rico, before joining the faculty of San Fernando Valley State College in 1957.

Since then, in addition to his duties as a teacher he has taken an active part in community affairs. He was appointed a Civil Service Commissioner for Los Angeles and founded the Commission to Preserve the History of Los Angeles.

In 1962-63 he was Fulbright Scholar to the Universidad de Valladolid in Spain, and that summer received a Fulbright Research Grant for studies in the Archives of the Indies in Seville. His Mexican, Latin American and Spanish residencies have thus given him deep insights into the broad historical background of the Mexican American.

At present, Dr. Nava serves as an elected member of the Board of Education of Los Angeles. In addition, he has just completed a textbook for public school use, ***Mexican Americans: Past, Present and Future.***

Preface

This short work will introduce the general reader to the Mexican American. As a group, it numbers well over five million people and is considered (after the Negro) the second largest significantly disadvantaged minority group in the United States.

Comparatively little has been written about the Mexican American either by specialists in the social sciences or by more general writers on the history of the United States. In view of the clear contemporary need for all Americans to know more about each other, this work will sketch the major themes and issues encompassed in the historical development of this significant group in our society. It is fair to point out that there will be some readers who may take issue with the cursory treatment of the subject itself as well as with the methodology. However, the purpose here is to open a door to greater knowledge and understanding for those who are willing to go beyond the limitations of this work.

It takes time and thought to be *successfully* brief. I would therefore like to acknowledge the fact that the treatment of both the ideas and the material which follow owes much to the assistance and suggestions of several colleagues who are members of the Educational Laboratory for Inter-American Studies: Edward V. Moreno, Rudolph Acuña, Dolores Litsinger and Manuel Servin. Although we were not always in agreement, my colleagues were of considerable aid in helping me decide what points to discuss in such a brief work on so broad a subject.

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chapter 1

Who and What is the Mexican American?

Nothing will arouse as much heated debate as a discussion on who the Mexican American is and what he should call himself. In the Southwest, where over 90% of Americans who can trace their ancestry to Mexico live, we find such descriptive names being used as the following: Mexican Americans, Mexicans, Latins, Latin Americans, Hispanos and Chicanos. And this list does not include slang terms that are used by both majority and minority groups. Few, if any, other minority groups in the United States encounter such diversity with respect to their identity. Indeed, great emotional value is attached to each of the above terms, as well as to the way in which it is used.

A breakdown of the various names commonly used by three different groups to describe Mexican Americans will indicate the

complexity and the emotional overtones involved in the question of nomenclature. For example:

MEXICAN AMERICANS	ANGLOS	MEXICANS
Generic:	**Generic:**	**Generic:**
Mexicano	Mexican American	Mexicano Americano
Latin American	Mexican	Mexicano
Hispanos	Latin American	Latinos
Latinos	Spanish American	Hispanos
	Hispanos	
Colloquial:	Latinos	**Colloquial:**
la raza	Spanish-surname White	*pocho
Chicanos		
batos (batos locos)	**Colloquial:**	
*tio taco	*wetback	
*Uncle Tamale	bracero	
	Chicano	
	Green-Carder	
	*spic	
	*cholos	
	*greasers	
	*beaners	

Asterisk denotes a disparaging term.

The general public knows little about the Mexican American. This is true, too, even among those whose profession it is to serve them. Listed below are some of the questions most frequently asked about Mexican Americans. These queries illustrate the present level of awareness and understanding of the Mexican American:

1. Is the culture of Mexico still retained by those who have been in this country a long time?
2. Why is the Mexican American culture so different from ours?
3. Why do Mexican Americans in terms of their numbers show up disproportionally in crime records?
4. Why don't Mexican American families stress education as Americans do?
5. Why don't Mexican Americans want to acculturate?
6. Why does the Mexican American peer group hold back those who try to achieve in "Anglo society?"
7. Should we "Americanize" Mexican American students at the expense of their own culture?

8. How does one change old culture patterns in school? (There is usually a negative connotation to "old cultural patterns.")
9. What are the reactions of Mexican American parents to the teacher who says their children have problems?
10. Will not special attention to the Mexican American spoil the group as a whole, perhaps to a point where it will be unable to make progress on its own?
11. How can we use Mexican American family patterns and customs to educational advantage?
12. What can we do to help build the self-image of the Mexican American?
13. What caused *you* to go ahead and get an education?

More Americans are asking questions about the Mexican American than ever before. The civil rights movement has not only made more people conscious of the problems facing racial, religious and ethnic minorities, but has also focused increased attention on these minorities in the areas of public affairs, government and education. This greater overall awareness of minority groups has inevitably resulted in concern for Mexican Americans, who have sometimes been referred to as the "forgotten minority" or else the "sleeping giant."

Few people have been aware that Mexican Americans in this country have a long history of social, political and economic activity, because publications that normally reach the general public have not dealt with this subject. This activity has taken the form of constant discussion and debate as to the role of the Mexican American in the United States, questions as to his destiny as well as what he should call himself. A study of history shows only too clearly that the course of human events is not always sensitive or responsive to the needs of a particular group; yet it is understandable for Mexican Americans to wish that this crucial question of identity be resolved before attempts are made to deal with other important issues. This question of identity continues to bedevil both the Mexican American and the majority society at the same time that the two groups are forced to address themselves to the

grave social problems affecting Mexican Americans today. And yet, despite this dilemma, the presence of this significant group in our midst presents a fascinating prospect for a happier and more creative society, if only we take the time and effort to stop, look and listen to what Mexican Americans are trying to tell us.

Each minority group to some extent feels different from every other, although it may share certain elements with them or with the majority group. Thus the American Indian, the Negro, the Jew and the Oriental may well have certain aspects in common with the Mexican American but may be very different in other respects. It is to the differences rather than the similarities that we must address ourselves, for it is these that have given rise to the issues our nation now faces.

The Mexican American feels that he is different from other people and that he should be understood and accepted on his terms. Many Mexican Americans feel that they have a special claim on American identity because their people have older roots in this country than many other minority groups. Indeed, this feeling (which, incidentally, most favors the American Indian) leads us to the question--What does being American mean, anyway? And can we determine this by such factors as place of prior residence, allegiance, numerical size, amount of political power, degree of cultural domination, etc.?

Who, then, is the real American? The Mexican American poses this question in his terms, just as the Negro has raised the question in terms of race and the Jew in terms of survival as a religious and ethnic group in the United States. (One example of contemporary Mexican American attitudes on this question can be seen in the following case. In the January 1968 issue of *Bronze*—a new Mexican American newspaper published by youths in Oakland, California—there appears the statement, "One thing I must teach my people: America is not a country. The United States is a country. America is a continent, a Brown continent.")

chapter 2

Some Historical Distortions

From the outset there have existed forces and pressures in American society which have made it possible for only a few ethnic or national minority groups to survive and retain their identity in the melting pot that is the United States. At each significant stage in American development, the white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant groups (identified with England) were in the numerical majority. It is they who had established by the 1840's the main features of the American character and way of life. Since the Mexican American was not involved in this process, it is obvious why he is not included in the histories of this earlier period in American development.

Many races and cultures have contributed to the present-day strength of the United States; this hardly needs restatement. What does, however, is the fact that historical accounts have presented a distorted picture of our past. History books have rightly stressed

the gains our country has made from the assimilation of many diverse peoples, but in the process they have overlooked the human losses involved. Countless historians have extolled our national growth but glossed over the injustices done to the Indian, Negro, Oriental and Jew. In short, our history books have been written by members of the dominant society, and throughout time they have been less than fair to the minority members. One can fairly say that the melting-pot process often alluded to is only partly accurate, and that the process by which the American national character was formed can more closely be likened to a large pressure cooker into which various diverse ingredients were introduced, boiled down and then poured into a ready-made mold. At the same time, those viewed as refuse and rejects, like the so-called Mongol hordes, Indian savages, half-breeds and other mongrel groups, were in effect cast aside.

Even before Americans and Mexicans (both of Spanish and native origin) encountered each other in the Southwest, a number of Americans had already formed an intense and belligerent feeling of superiority over certain groups which seemed to them to endanger the security of the United States. In his book *Strangers in the Land,* John Higham comments on this in the following passage: "Nativism, therefore, should be defined as intense opposition to an internal minority on the grounds of its foreign (i.e. 'un-American') connections."

Three major characteristics emerged as central to American nativism: (1) anti-Catholicism, (2) fear of foreign political radicals and revolutionaries and (3) feelings of racial (cultural) superiority among Anglo-Saxons.

Anti-Catholic feelings, which date from colonial times, were reflected in the various restrictions placed upon the civil rights of Catholics in most of the American colonies. These restrictions on residence, religious practice, office holding and voting continued in various states after American independence was won from England. In *The Protestant Crusade—1800-1860,* Ray Allen Billington

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traces in detail the anti-Stuart feelings, the hostility to Catholic Irish nationalism, the fear of Papist plots made with the French in Canada and, later, the fears of Catholic Spain's designs on the South and West. The French Revolution also caused apprehension lest its more radical ideas might be spread to this country. As a consequence, the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 authorized the imprisonment or expulsion of anyone (especially aliens) deemed dangerous to internal peace and safety. And the spirit of the acts lived on even after their repeal.

Feelings of American superiority and territorial expansionism are well expressed in the slogan "Manifest Destiny." The desire to incorporate all adjacent lands and to impose on them the benefits of American institutions and ideas was deeply ingrained by the 1830's. Albert K. Weinburg's *Manifest Destiny* depicts how Americans came to rely on a varying mixture of doctrines which justified expansionism. These doctrines included idealistic views of providential mission, questionable notions of national development, ideals of social duty and legal rationalizations. Many Americans, therefore, came to believe that the United States was indeed duty bound to spread territorially to the Pacific and lead the sister republics of Latin America along the path of Anglo-Saxon virtue and justice. In this context, the Monroe Doctrine of 1823 fits in neatly as an expression of American determination to fight, if necessary, to keep European power out of Latin America. In short, for many Americans the entire western hemisphere was their backyard, and theirs to dominate.

chapter 3

How the Mexican American Came Into Being

The encounters between traders from the United States and frontiersmen from New Spain date back to the earliest years of the 19th century when the Santa Fe trade grew despite official Spanish displeasure. After Mexico achieved independence from Spain and began its life as a republic in 1824, new circumstances affected the relations between the two peoples. Whereas the United States now owned the vast Louisiana Territory, stretching from the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific Ocean, Mexico was struggling on the one hand to establish its republic, and on the other to deal with the impatient expansionist-minded Americans who were immigrating into Mexican territories in the Southwest. One might well say, therefore, that the eventual conflict between the United States and Mexico was only a matter of time.

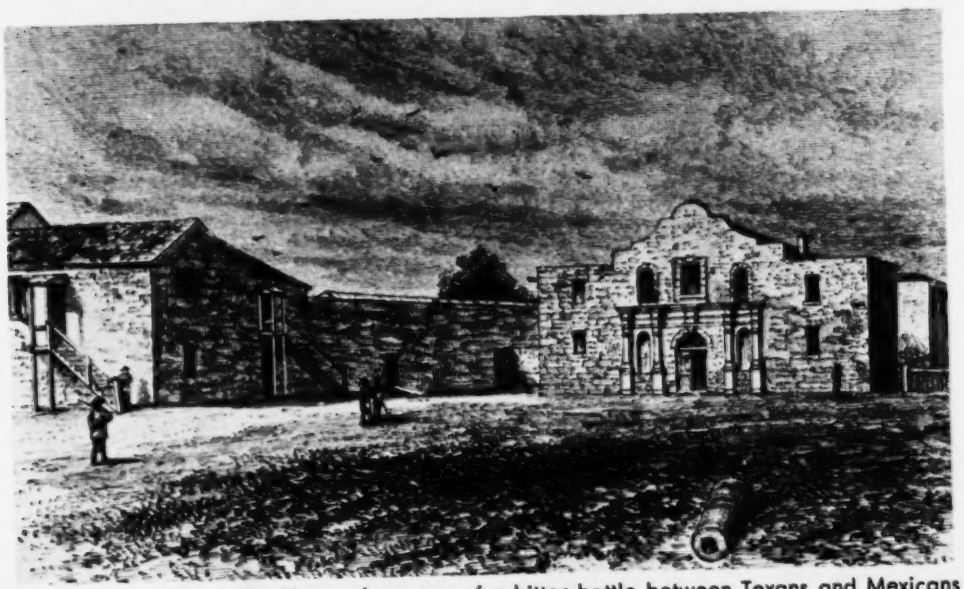
Americans began to move into Texas during the early 1820's under liberal Mexican laws designed to promote development, but they soon had conflicting feelings and beliefs. Some feared for the loss of their slaves, others were unhappy with Mexico's inability to meet their needs, while still others simply wanted to form a separate state or nation and perhaps join the United States. At the same time there was widespread sympathy in the South and later in Congressional circles for Texan separation from Mexico and annexation to the United States. Thus, for a variety of reasons (to which civil strife and confusion in Mexico contributed), Texas broke away and formed a separate republic in 1836. Fuel was added to the fire when, even before war broke out between the two nations in 1846, the slaughter of Texans at the Alamo and retaliatory American action created hatred between Americans and Mexicans; there was no middle ground. After the U. S. government annexed Texas in 1845, both nations prepared for war. (For further information on this period, see Ramon Ruiz, who has reviewed the judgments of historians in his small work, *The Mexican War: Was It Manifest Destiny?)*

Conflict finally broke out between the two countries when the United States launched a series of attacks upon central Mexico, which was already divided by civil strife. A three-pronged American attack on land was directed across the Rio Grande, while a naval invasion along the Gulf of Mexico culminated in a march on the capital, following a route similar to that of Cortez. Meanwhile, a cross-country expedition headed for Santa Fe and California. In concert with these tactics, another naval squadron was dispatched to join in a local uprising led by Anglos in California. In the face of these combined actions, Mexico was virtually helpless.

By 1848, Mexico, which had suffered heavy casualties, existed in name only, and a provisional government signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hildago. By the terms of this treaty Mexico survived as a disheartened and divided people holding little more than half of its former territory. Some Mexicans still blame the President at that time, General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, for bungling the

war effort, while others claim that nothing could have stopped the well-planned assault by the Americans. For its part, the United States had won its first offensive war and now included within its territory untold thousands of people who were, by definition, Mexican American. (That is, many remained behind and as a result became American citizens.)

Although many Mexicans had helped Texas and California separate themselves from Mexico and also took an active role in the new governments, most of them were viewed with disdain by Americans. The inevitable bitterness led to recurrent violence between the two groups, and bandits from both sides roamed the Southwest, making life precarious for everyone. Gradually, however, new governmental and legal practices brought a new group to power that either systematically pushed Mexican Americans into the background or else placed obstacles in the path of their civic participation. Mexican Americans generally replied to this treatment as best they could, but were soon forced to accommodate to second-class citizenship, the provisions of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo notwithstanding.



An early woodcut of The Alamo, the scene of a bitter battle between Texans and Mexicans in 1836. (Brown Brothers)

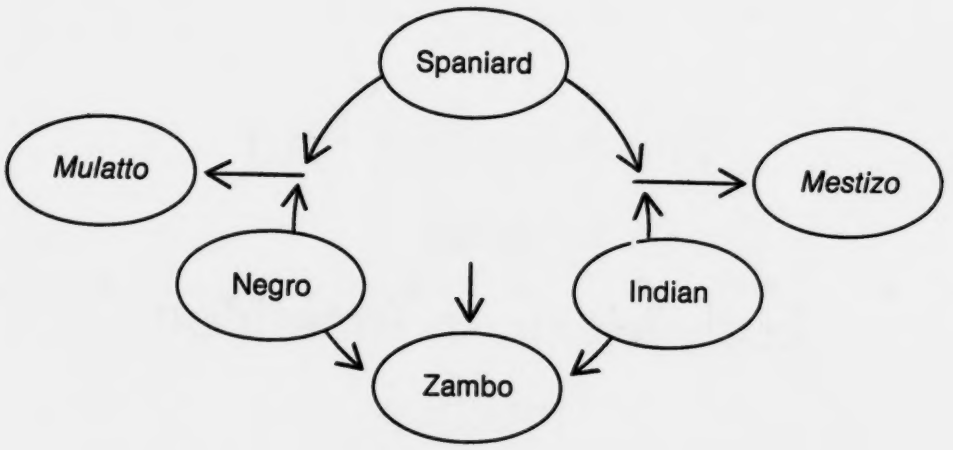
chapter 4

The Mexican Past and Early Mexican American History

Mexican Americans are very heterogeneous. Thus, at one extreme of the scale, we find an intellectual like Luis Cabrera claiming that there is no such thing as "the Mexican people" ("The Key to the Mexican Chaos" in Hubert Herring's *Renascent Mexico)*. At the other extreme, José Vasconcelos writes in *La Raza Cósmica* that Mexicans are a "cosmic race" embodying the best of the Old and New Worlds. As typical of still other Mexican thinkers, we can point to Octavio Paz *(Labyrinth of Solitude)*, who peers deeply into the complex psychological makeup of Mexicans in an effort to understand his own people better.

Until recent times, relatively few Mexican Americans married outside their own group; consequently, most are of direct Mexican descent. Indeed, in the light of the constant stream of immigration from Mexico, we are compelled to look at the early origins of Mexicans in order to understand the Mexican American

In rapidly descending order, Mexicans derive from Indians, Spaniards, Negroes and Europeans (other than those from Spain). The two main components are the Indian and the Spaniard, who produced through intermarriage the *mestizo*. Negroes were brought to Mexico during the early colonial period, and several other new groups emerged from their unions. The diagram below illustrates graphically how the emergence of these groups came about:



By the late 18th century there were about 18 different racial or social elements stemming out of the basic components and their subsequent mixtures. These include the Español, Indio, Negro, Castizo, Mulatto, Zambo, Morisco, Salta-atrás, Chino, etc.

The Mexican of today can trace his roots back to the time when the Spaniards conquered Mexico. He emerged as the result of a process called *mestizaje*, i.e., the mixing of Spanish and Indian bloods. Such intermarriage began after the overthrow of the Aztec empire and the rebuilding of the City of Mexico on the ruins of the beautiful city of Tenochititlán. Both the Spanish crown and the Catholic Church encouraged intermarriage and, as a result, the "civilizing" and Christianization of the Mexican Indian truly began.

This dual heritage of Mexicans enriched and complicated the make-up of the *mestizos*. On the one hand, they were assigned a lower-class status, but on the other they benefited from the fact

that both the Indian and Spanish cultures which helped form them were rich and creative by any standard. Though the Indian heritage was submerged and remained so for more than 300 years, new interest in his cultural contributions has developed since the Mexican Revolution of 1910.

Because the Aztecs were dominant at the time when the Spaniards set foot on Mexican soil, the latter assumed that they were the creators of the civilization they viewed. But today we know more about other Indian cultures which played a role in providing the cultural base upon which the Aztecs built. Among these earlier cultures we find the Toltecs, Olmecs and Mayans. These Meso-American civilizations built outstanding cities, and developed literature, philosophy, mathematics and fine arts to a high degree. The Aztecs built gloriously upon these successive waves of earlier cultures, so that when the audacious band led by Cortez first looked out over the Valley of Mexico, one member said: "To many of us it seemed doubtful whether we were asleep or awake. Never did man see, hear, or dream of anything equal to the spectacle which appeared to our eyes this day."

For their part, the Spaniards were also an advanced people, enriched over the centuries by the contributions of the many peoples

Huge carved monoliths which once supported a Toltec temple stand about 50 miles from Mexico City at Tula, Hidalgo, Mexico. (Mexican National Tourist Council)

who visited that continental crossroad. Prominent among the early civilizers were the Romans who occupied the Iberian peninsula two centuries before Christ. Their genius for organization established so deep an interrelationship between their language, religion, social institutions and cultural values (particularly as they relate to the family), that much of present-day Hispanic culture is substantially Roman.

Roman control of Hispania crumbled in the face of the Visigothic and Teutonic invasions of the 5th century A.D. Many of these barbarians remained in Spain for some 300 years, long enough to mix to a considerable extent with the native population. These invaders introduced certain Gallic and Teutonic institutions, legal practices and customs related to both monarchy and government that have made certain Spanish scholars feel Spain owes as much to the Visigoths as it does to the Romans. By this time, too, many Jews had come to Spain and had taken firm roots in all walks of life there. Although they suffered from periodic prejudice, they nonetheless established a significant place for themselves in the political, economic and intellectual life of the country. Finally, the Islami, or Moors, invaded the peninsula in 711 and, in the course of their religious wars, drove out many Visigoths.

The Moors remained in Spain for about 700 years. During this time Christians, Jews and Moors coexisted, shifting their loyalties to suit the occasion. Even the legendary El Cid, an early prototype of the Hispanic *caudillo* (leader), lent his sword on occasion to opposing sides. The Jews and Moors enriched Spanish life greatly, whereas northern Europe was in the grip of the Dark Ages, due to the fall of the Roman Empire. The Moors tried to introduce their architecture, literature, fine arts, knowledge of medicine and techniques of farming, and to establish a number of universities. However, the native Spaniard was open to this cross-cultural experience in varying degrees, depending upon the relative vigor of Christianity and the extent of Moorish occupation. One example, though, of a Moorish custom readily accepted by the Spaniards was the one which established the man as absolute head of the family.

The same year that the last Moorish kingdom was overthrown in Granada, Spaniards opened a new world to European eyes. After the long *Reconquista* of the motherland and the expulsion of the Jews and the Moors, the idea of building a new society in America served to liberate the long dormant Spanish creative force.

Spain gave of its best to America for some 300 years beginning about 1492; its faults and errors were those of its day. After an intriguing debate lasting over a generation, Spain concluded that the Indians were men, after all, and equal to Spaniards in the eyes of the king and of God. In *The Spanish Struggle for Justice in the Conquest of America,* Lewis Hanke best tells the story of how Spain saw its goals vis-à-vis America, and of the inevitable failure

Santa Prisca Church, in Taxco, completed in 1758, one of the most beautiful Spanish colonial churches in Mexico. (Mexican National Tourist Council)

as Spanish accomplishments fell short of the mark. And yet, even before the death of Cortez, Spain was already embarked upon a vast effort to civilize and Christianize the Indians as well as to rule over them. Its urban planning has never been excelled; colleges, universities, modern printing houses and many religious orders were established in the cities to help make New Spain a better place than it had been. It was as part of this century-long effort that pueblos, *presidios* (forts) and missions reached far up into the deserts of the Southwest.

From the Gulf of Mexico to the shores of the Pacific Ocean, repeated efforts were made to establish civilized communities, despite the desert's resistance to change and the violent hostility of the plains Indians. The founding of Los Angeles in 1781 was typical of such efforts. Among the small band that crossed impassable deserts and survived the warlike Indians were Spaniards, Indians, *mestizos*, Negroes, mulattoes and one Chino (not Oriental)—all Mexican pioneers, although there was not yet a Mexico as such.

When Mexico established a republican form of government in 1824, it had already suffered an agonizing 14 years during which obstacles to republican institutions had made themselves evident. Father Miguel Hidalgo turned loose the racial hatred the Indian

The Misión Dolores, established in 1776 by a land expedition commanded by Col. Juan Bautista de Anza, where the present San Francisco is situated. (Courtesy of The American Museum of Natural History)

felt toward the Spaniard when he struck for Mexican independence in 1810, but the race war he unwittingly unleashed was soon put down with vehemence by the royal authorities. Ten years later, however, when the Spanish throne briefly turned to liberalism, conservative *criollos* (American-born people of Spanish descent) conspired to set up a separate empire of Mexico. But this parliamentary monarchy under Agustin de Iurbide soon fell, because of both internal weaknesses and outside pressure from Mexican *guerrilleras* (guerillas) who had been fighting in the countryside since 1810.

Though the first President of Mexico, Guadalupe Victoria, was a *mestizo*, the upper classes were almost all *criollos* and very conservative when not monarchists at heart. Thus, Victoria apart, the influence of the *mestizo* on Mexican society was very limited, as was also that of the Indian and the Negro.

After a brief peaceful interlude in national affairs, civil strife broke out again in 1828 with a royalist plot. Mexico at the time was a federal republic struggling to hold together states that harbored dreams of independence. Within the government there was little agreement on essential questions; fears of a Spanish invasion forced it to build armies instead of schools, and to raise a military class to prominence; conservatives, royalists, the army and the Catholic Church gave it only lukewarm support. It was at this stage of internal crisis that pressure from the United States began to exert itself.

After 1848 and the victory of U.S. forces over Mexico, conditions in the Southwest were not favorable to the Mexican American. To many, he represented both a former enemy and a dangerous element that had to be contained. So that while some Spanish-surnamed people established relatively adequate relations with the Anglo Americans in areas like New Mexico and lower Colorado, except for a small number (where assimilation and intermarriage occurred), most Mexican Americans occupied a place on a lower rung of society.

The Gold Rush years in California and the subsequent mineral finds in other states of the Union were also factors in this new development. Thousands of forty-niners and foreigners suddenly swelled the ranks of those who stood to gain most from the dispossession of the "Mexicans," who were not far above the Chinese coolie in Anglo esteem. Mexican Americans could find some small consolation, though, in the fact that the Indians, Negroes and Chinese were treated worse. U. S. population figures meant little until after 1900, but it seems clear that when they were driven from the gold fields, Mexican Americans either lived on small farms and

An old photograph of prospectors during the Gold Rush of 1849. (Brown Brothers)

ranches or did the work of artisans. Many were virtually peons on land now owned by Anglos who acted like feudal barons.

As new forms of farming and mining came into being in the Southwest, Mexican Americans supplied much of the labor. Their familiarity with the region also made them valuable in cattle and sheep raising.

One of the questions that often arises in the minds of those who hear about Mexican American conditions might be put this way: "But the Irish and Jews have made it; what's wrong with the Mexicans?" There are variations on this theme that it must be the Mexican American's fault if he can't get what he wants the way the

other minorities have—one of them being, "After all, he isn't black!" What *are* the reasons, then, for his disadvantaged position?

In each state where Mexican Americans resided in significant numbers, legal systems and bureaucratic processes were established (in effect or by design) which deprived them of many of their civil rights. Once this disadvantage was established it became self-perpetuating, with Anglo social pressures on the one hand and force on the other helping to maintain the inferior status of the Mexican American.

Of course, practices and conditions varied in Texas, Colorado, the New Mexico territory (also Arizona) and California. Generally speaking, however, new land registry laws and practices imposed serious limitations on all Mexican Americans who either held title as members of a communal group, held documents in Spanish, or had possession by virtue of verbal agreements. Anglo-American lawyers, both as individuals and as groups, were quick to take advantage of any new law in which they could find potential pitfalls for the Mexican American. One of the more famous of such legal groups was the Santa Fe Ring, whose ties extended all the way to the courts, political parties and government officials in Washington, D. C.

The new legal systems established in the various Southwestern states posed special problems for the Mexican American. With some few exceptions, English was the only language permitted in court, thus making it almost impossible for Mexican American adults to have equal access to justice. Since they were the providers and property holders in their respective families, such exclusion from due process was a mortal blow both to them and to their heirs.

The imposition of property taxes as the main source of revenue for local governments posed another serious problem for Mexican Americans, who were not accustomed to pay such taxes under Mexican rule. In fact, the failure to pay them promptly opened an avenue of exploitation for tax-sale opportunists.

It can be fairly said that the despoliation of Mexican Americans

is an event unparalleled in United States history. In those cases where legal means or subterfuge were insufficient in helping the Anglos to grasp control over land, water sources and mineral sites, violence was openly used.

Most early historical accounts have ignored this despoiling, while contemporary accounts by Anglo historians who gave it attention tended to justify it as a necessary means of taming the frontier and establishing American institutions. The unscrupulous Anglo became the "pioneer" and the Mexican who resisted the "bandido." Thus a cowboy-and-Indian interpretation of history established a mythology which literature, theatre, radio, movies and later television have helped to imbed in the American mentality.

In another vein, Mexican Americans in the Southwestern states were hamstrung politically by a variety of practices which persist even today. In some of these states, they numbered as high as 90% of the population. And yet in effect they were shoved into a corner, so that few Mexican Americans were elected or appointed to public office.

Again with some exceptions, notably in portions of New Mexico and Colorado, voting practices imposed special problems on most Spanish-speaking Mexican Americans. Examinations for literacy, comprehension of American institutions and similar tests proved rather effective when applied with a double standard. Voter registration practices, such as those that have required renewed registration for each election or registration solely at "downtown locations," have served similar purposes.

There were many variations on the theme of how to restrict political participation by Mexican Americans. To cope with even the limited political activity that developed, gerrymandering of districts or elections-at-large frustrated efforts of Mexican Americans to elect candidates. Where these techniques failed, the final ploy was to put up "bought" Mexican American candidates in order to siphon away votes from a potential winner. In many cases, the failure of Mexican Americans to organize behind certain candidates

foredoomed them to splintered voting, the result of which was the election of other candidates.

As public education developed in the vast region of the Southwest, each state took measures of its own to provide for the population in general. For minorities like the Mexican Americans, a dual educational system was widely developed. As a consequence, schools became a mixed blessing for Mexican American children. Although an undetermined number surely gained from them, the preponderant majority did not. In fact, one might rightly claim that most Mexican American children have been irreparably damaged by public education in the Southwest. The conditions, curricula and educators' attitudes imposed a negative self-image on the children, starting in the early grades. By acts of commission and omission, Mexican American children were taught that they represented a conquered people and an inferior culture. Furthermore, the trend established after 1848 was to expect less from Mexican American children than from others. Thus many educators misdirected their efforts and their concern for Mexican American children by trying to help them adjust to the reality (i.e., the prejudice and discrimination) they would encounter as adults, rather than by teaching them to fight it.

Only recently have any school districts begun to count the numbers of Mexican American children who abandon school either because it is irrelevant or too painful to endure. Since today's dropout rates soar beyond the 50% level in many areas, one can assume the rates were at least comparable in earlier days when prejudice was even more blatant and widespread. It should cause no surprise, therefore, that the vast majority of children in each successive generation of Mexican Americans came to fit the negative stereotype many Anglo Americans had of them. In short, the public schools established a self-fulfilling prophecy which few Mexican American children escaped.

For those few who attained advanced education or technical and professional competence, there was still the hard reality that many

positions for which they qualified were closed to them on the basis of their ethnic background. Many employers (public and private) as well as unions have excluded Mexican Americans in a blanket manner. Others established quotas or offered limited opportunities in certain job categories in the mines, railroads, ranches, farms and factories.

The effectiveness of such techniques has been recognized in recent years by students of prejudice. It is important to point out here that, although virtually all Mexican Americans are Caucasians, the curbs placed on them were as drastic as they were in the case of Negroes. In addition, the attitude of most Southwestern Anglo Americans well into the 20th century has been to consider Mexican Americans to be an inferior race.

The basic pattern of the relations between these two groups was established soon after 1848, and a certain balance was achieved. The changes effected by railroads and gradual urbanization altered this balance but did not significantly change it. It is difficult to estimate the number of Mexican Americans who "passed" in Anglo society before 1900. To begin with, there were always those who claimed they were Spanish rather than Mexican by descent, hoping thus to gain acceptance by disowning their heritage. For many Anglos this was a badge of respectability they could accept. (For example, countless "Spanish" restaurants successfully served such Indian dishes as tortillas and tamales.) Other Mexican Americans left the region altogether to escape prejudice, while still others intermarried. The vast majority, however, lived a life apart from Anglo America, although they were indispensable to it. Most of them lived on farms and ranches as hired hands or tenants, or in the *barrios* (neighborhoods similar to ghettos) of small towns and cities where they held the really menial positions. Those who lived in isolated mining towns or along the railroad tracks in company villages were almost completely out of the mainstream of national life.

chapter 5

The Mexican American in Recent Times

The social balance between the Mexican American and Anglo American was altered forever by the Mexican Revolution of 1910 and the First World War. First of all, the wars helped to demonstrate the mutual dependence of the United States and Mexico; secondly, the fighting within Mexico (from 1910 to at least 1917) and the long-term dislocations it subsequently caused pushed many thousands to flee north for safety. This influx spurred an active recruitment of Mexicans by urban as well as rural American employers.

The international border has done far more than merely separate the two countries for the large numbers of Mexicans who

traveled north in hopes of bettering themselves; it has, in fact, a capricious lord and master. *La migra* (the immigration authorities) has faithfully served the labor needs of the United States by relaxing or tightening access to it, depending on circumstances. In times of labor surplus or when undesirable individuals were involved, *la migra* and local police have cooperated in rounding up and deporting countless people on short notice. Blockades around *barrios*, extensive searches of property and examination of papers after harvest time usually produced many Mexicans who were illegal immigrants in the United States. It was not long before deep-seated feelings of hostility developed among Mexican Americans over the opportunism of border controls that served U. S. economic and political ends so narrowly and callously.

Most Mexican immigrants planned to return to Mexico, but many stayed. The actual number is impossible to determine, since even in recent years data for immigration is incomplete due to lax counting practices and the willingness at times of both immigrants and Americans to bypass legal channels. The smuggling of Mexican workers has flourished over the years. *Coyotes* (smugglers) have helped Mexican immigrants for a fee, and *enganchistas* (literally from "to hook up") have found them jobs with opportunistic employers. (Inevitably, violence and crime have been part of this traffic in human beings.) Despite annual deportations that totaled many thousands, the number of Mexican Americans has increased since the Revolution. The vast majority of immigrants have come from central and northern Mexico and have been at low economic and educational levels.

During the Depression years, the Southwestern states used various means to get rid of surplus Mexican American labor. Repatriation programs returned many thousands to Mexico to ease the load on local relief agencies and to improve job prospects for "native" Americans. And in cases where these programs proved to be only partially successful, pressure and harassment were used to supplement them.

With the outbreak of the Second World War, rather than face another mass immigration from Mexico, the U. S. government introduced the *bracero* program. This served the mutual interests of the United States and Mexico by providing a controlled pool of temporary Mexican labor. After 1942 (when Mexico declared war on the Axis powers) further agreements between the two, now allied countries fed thousands of Mexican nationals into the towns and fields of America to help in the war effort. When the war ended in 1945, appeals from American employers kept the program alive, and the numbers of Mexican nationals in this country increased still further. During the early 1950's, the United States annually contracted close to half a million *braceros*, although peak employment was closer to 200,000 several years later when the war labor shortages had vanished. In the last year of the *bracero* program (1964), only some 32,000 *braceros* came forth from Mexico.

Free enterprise on both sides of the border conspired to violate the law in order to make a profit from employing illegal Mexican labor. In 1949 there were about 107,000 *braceros* contracted for work in the United States, while during that same year deportations of wetbacks (Mexican laborers who illegally crossed the border, as by wading the Rio Grande) numbered 293,000. In 1954 deportations surpassed a million. It is unclear how many wetbacks there were in the United States at any one time, but they probably constitute one of the largest peacetime invasions of one country by citizens of another. Wetbacks came because they were sought after; when deported, many came right back. And although most of them intended to return after a time to Mexico, many others found ways to stay, thus swelling further the already numerous ranks of Mexican Americans.

Traditionally certain Mexicans have been allowed to work in the United States on a day-to-day basis so long as they maintain permanent residence in Mexico. Special visas, called Green Cards, have permitted United States border employers to hire Mexican labor on a daily basis. Green Carders are much sought after by employers who can then avoid paying higher wages to American workers.

Other Mexican Americans have been adversely affected by this supply of cheap labor that has undercut their bargaining power. But, in the eyes of most Anglo Americans, there has been little distinction drawn between the two groups or attention paid to the fact that the desperate Green Carder has tended to pull the Mexican American down to his own economic level.

By 1960, Mexican Americans in the United States numbered about five million, the majority of them living in the Southwest. As has already been indicated, most of the recent immigrants have come from rural parts of Mexico where there are inferior socio-economic conditions. But they are, for all that, not significantly different from Mexican Americans, in that both have found it difficult to take advantage of opportunities that other Americans take for granted.

The common border binds Mexico and the United States together in many ways. Perhaps the simplest illustration of this can be seen in the figures which show that in recent times there have been over 65 million border crossings each year. Most of this traffic involves tourists and Green Carders rather than immigrants. However, the mobility of the immigrants has been a large factor contributing to the continued poverty and the comparative disorganization of Mexican American communities, as well as to the fact that Mexican Americans have lacked the resources to meet their social, economic and political needs.

Though Mexican immigration to the United States is clearly one of the most significant movements of peoples across any border, it is, nonetheless, poorly understood. And, as long as the two nations continue to share a border, movement across that line will reflect the extent to which the Southwest is a region that deserves separate study.

The Second World War set off a new period in Mexican American history. Generally the wartime life and the changes that stemmed from it benefited Mexican Americans. (For example, manpower was needed desperately, and so in some areas barriers to better employment were gradually let down.) However, prejudice and

chauvinism still ran high. During 1942 the press as well as law enforcement officials whipped up anti-Mexican feeling by charges of delinquency on the part of Mexican American youth and a congenital inferiority which they claimed threatened society at large. At the same time, fears over a possible Japanese invasion fed American fears of minorities in general. In Los Angeles, during June of 1943, several thousand servicemen (exemplifying the deep-seated dislike of Mexican Americans that existed there in many quarters) took the law into their own hands and attacked Mexican American youths wearing "zoot" suits both in the downtown area and in several of the *barrios*.

All this notwithstanding, the war did open new doors for Mexican Americans. Returning veterans had broader outlooks and new hope, as well as medals for valor far out of proportion to their number. Many of them utilized the G.I. Bill to further themselves, both in the development of trade skills and the acquiring of a higher education. Federal housing loans for veterans helped many Mexican Americans improve their condition by allowing them to move into new areas, although considerable discrimination still existed. Many young Mexican Americans moved out of the *barrios* and, in so doing, achieved considerable assimilation into the American community. Others, however, preferred to retain their identification and took up the fight for justice and equality that others had fought for during the 1920's and 1930's.

Though all told the socio-economic conditions of most Mexican Americans did not improve significantly even as late as the early 1960's, there were some important changes. By 1960 there had been a major migration to the urban centers which now included 80% of all Mexican Americans living in the United States. Many urban *barrios* became ports of entry through which thousands passed as they moved on to other areas.

Urbanization has proved a mixed blessing, for greater opportunities have been accompanied by new problems—e.g., the increase in the number of Mexican Americans entering the professions, white collar work and the trades has been surpassed by the increase in

the Mexican American population. The net effect thus appears to be a loss of ground in education, income, health and other related indices. (Between 1950 and 1960, the Mexican American population in the Southwest increased by about 50%, whereas the Anglo population increased by only some 33%.)

Among the roughly five million Mexican Americans, a disproportionate number are young (15-19 years) as compared with the general United States population. It follows, therefore, that not only proportionately fewer Mexican Americans are working at an age when their income would be higher, but that the average income of Mexican American families is lower than that of American families. In fact, throughout the United States, about a third of Mexican American families have an income of some $3,000 per year, and since Mexican Americans tend to have large families, this income has to be divided among more children than would be the case in American families. It should also be remembered that the manual type of work done by approximately 75% of Mexican Americans provides little security and involves high risks of unemployment.

In many ways, recent generations of youthful Mexican Americans have fallen into much the same trap that caught their parents—a web of poverty, illness, ignorance and exclusively manual skills. Additional handicaps stemming from a bilingual and bicultural situation have aggravated the problem, as have indifference and prejudice. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that few young Mexican Americans break out of the old pattern.

The old way of life is constantly reinforced by the proximity of Mexican Americans to Mexico. No other American minority group faces this situation. For many years, over a score of newspapers in the Southwest have been written either entirely or partly in Spanish. Newspapers and magazines from Mexico have also been readily available. More recently, radio entered the picture and today over 200 radio stations broadcast entirely or partly in Spanish (though more for Cubans and Puerto Ricans than for Mexican Americans). Similarly, since the cinema became such a popular medium, movie theatres throughout the Southwest have featured films in Spanish

(most of which come from Mexico and Argentina), as has television. In short, all these media have constantly reinforced Spanish and Mexican culture among Mexican Americans. The result has been that in a sense Mexican Americans, who exceed the population of several European countries, have come to represent a nation within a nation (as do the French Canadians in Canada). Yet they have been creative and adaptable in their efforts to live and seek happiness within an often hostile and alien culture.

In earlier years, various Mexican American social clubs and mutual aid societies had helped their members to adjust and live within Anglo society by providing a retreat or shelter in the *barrios.* Now new organizations were created with reform and progress in mind and a copy of Robert's *Rules of Order* in hand. The Community Service Organization (CSO) in California, the American G.I. Forum, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), etc., emulated Anglo-type civic organizations. As for politics, groups like the Mexican American Political Association (MAPA) and the Political Association of Spanish-Speaking Organizations (ACCPE) led the way.

Because there are so few who can or are prepared to help them, most sophisticated Mexican Americans believe they must be elected rather than appointed to public office. Although there has been a numerical increase in Mexican Americans so elected, the group has lost ground, nonetheless, in view of population increases. Thus the recent election of two state Congressmen in Texas (Henry B. Gonzales and Eligio de la Garza), a U.S. Senator in New Mexico (Joseph Montoya) and a U.S. Congressman in California (Edward R. Roybal), as well as of a scattering of city councilmen and school board members, does not constitute a force that can adequately look after the interests of the Mexican American at large.

Over the years neither of the two major political parties has committed itself to helping Mexican Americans. Most politically active Mexican Americans, however, have identified with the Democratic Party because of its traditional New Deal orientation at the na-

tional level (as opposed to the "big business" and nativistic image attached to the Republican Party).

But the local Democratic Party in the Southwest has been another matter. Contrary to national party principles, it has deliberately frustrated Mexican American political participation time and time again, with the result that proportionately few Mexican Americans actually vote. Local Democratic politicos in turn have shown little real concern for this small bloc of votes. At the same time, for reasons connected with nativism, Republicans have made no concerted effort to woo these minority voters. As a result, Democrats have tended to take Mexican Americans for granted and to break campaign promises freely. This vicious circle is complete and very hard to break.

The following case well illustrates this general situation. Only recently the California State Senate ironically celebrated the 107th anniversary of Mexico's national holiday (*Cinco de Mayo*—May 5) on the very same day it voted against a measure that, if approved by the voters, would have permitted Spanish-speaking American citizens to vote—even though they could not read the U. S. Constitution in English. It was only natural, therefore, for Mexican Americans to have felt that once again over 500,000 of them were denied suffrage; and this despite the provisions of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the Mexican War and provided protection for "the free enjoyment of their liberty, property and religion which they profess."

Time and again insistence upon the readings of English as a universal requirement for voting was made publicly by the opponents of this constitutional amendment. On the opposite side, proponents of the measure argued that there exist today forms of communication (radio, television, etc.) that are not literary, and that the ballot would provide certain minorities with an incentive for acculturation. And while there is room for an honest difference of opinion on this question, the net effect of such an attitude on the part of

the opposing majority, has been detrimental to the political effectiveness of the Mexican American.

After 1970, the political effectiveness of the Mexican American will be enhanced due to the recent decision of the Bureau of the Census to include a direct count of Mexican Americans. Their original decision to omit a count of Mexican Americans was reversed after protest voiced across the nation made the Bureau realize that the second largest minority in the United States could no longer be counted as "Spanish-surnamed White" as in the census of 1960. Spaniards, Portuguese and various Latin Americans were indiscriminately included in this term. Now, more precise counts and locations will make it possible to take advantage of various federal and state programs in health, education and welfare. Local politics will be altered as a result of the 1970 census.

It surprises many people that in view of the numerous obstacles faced by Mexican Americans, they have not displayed disloyalty to the United States. Quite the contrary, Mexican Americans have a deep commitment and a strong feeling of patriotism for their country which has been demonstrated over and over. In the Southwest especially, though many entrenched Anglos who identify with the established interests have looked upon Mexican Americans as foreigners, the loyalty of Mexican Americans has risen above such bigots and has been directed instead towards America at large. It is likewise a known fact that extremist groups—both of the right and left—have failed to gain a foothold among Mexican Americans, despite periodic efforts to do so.

For the Mexican American the administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson marked a new period. More than any previous president, he gave recognition and support to this particular minority group. The formation in 1967 of the Inter-Agency Committee on Mexican Affairs provided a forum and clearing house for information which Vincente Ximenes, its director, used to good advantage. The highlight of its activities was the Cabinet Committee Hearings on Mexican American Affairs, held in El Paso in October, 1967. Over

fifty Mexican American activists, scholars and professionals gave testimony before members of the President's Cabinet. And while pickets protested that the meetings were not held in Washington (as they were in the case of Negroes), and that vital Mexican American needs were not being met, in the long run the El Paso meetings were of great importance, because they marked national recognition of the Mexican American.

With the recent election of President Richard M. Nixon, Mexican Americans had new grounds for pessimism, particularly in view of his presidential campaign virtually ignoring minority groups. Taking note of this, President Nixon quickly altered this image and voiced concern for minorities and their problems. Newly-appointed Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, Robert H. Finch, gave many Mexican Americans the hope that the White House would give them attention, after all. Furthermore, the President decided to continue the Inter-Agency Committee on Mexican American Affairs appointing Martin Castillo as its director. Soon after, in an effort to assist Mexican Americans in the fields of industry, commerce and finance, he appointed Hilary Sandoval as head of the Small Business Administration. In various parts of the country, Republicans have been stepping up efforts to win Mexican American votes away from the Democrats.

chapter 6

Quo Vadis Chicano?

Today's generation of young Mexican Americans is unlike any other, and presents some grave problems as well as some wonderful prospects for the future. In an effort to identify with something of their own, many young people now call themselves Chicanos. The etymology is not fully clear, but it is believed to be a diminutive form of "Mexican" as well as a derisive slang term used in Mexico for country hicks. Young Mexican Americans, however, have given the term a positive meaning and prefer it, as a label, to "Mexican American." In fact, in their eyes, whether or not one is willing to call himself Chicano is a litmus test of cultural loyalty.

There is a wide spectrum of ideas and feelings among the Chicano generation. Some believe in assimilation as a goal, while others reject it and argue for a distinct Mexican culture within a culturally pluralistic U.S. The movement is still in progress, and Mexican Americans are divided over its merits.

Anger and belligerency directed toward the Anglo mainstream of American life and a sense of alienation from this mainstream are

clearly evident in the Chicano movement. Chicanos have drawn on both black militant tactics and on Mexican revolutionary heroes like Emiliano Zapata for inspiration. Actually, Chicanos in many ways exemplify a mirror image of traditional American political tactics. Marches, riots, civil disobedience, violence and prejudice are unfortunately as much a part of our American tradition as are our virtues. Thus, both brown (Chicano) and black militant leaders often claim the right to return in kind the treatment they feel their predecessors have received.

At the heart of Chicano activity is a clear defense of Mexican American culture. Chicanos demand recognition of, and respect for, the importance and meaningfulness of their own language and customs. Some even claim that it is the monolingual Anglo who is disadvantaged, and that Chicanos *must* be accepted as bilingual and bicultural individuals with, if anything, a prior claim to the "American" label.

Today, there is a cultural revolution under way that coincides with the political demands made by the Chicanos. *Barrio* papers like *Con Safos* (Los Angeles) and journals like *El Grito* (Berkeley) have sprouted up throughout the Southwest; others, like *Infierno* (San Antonio), have been harassed out of print. Some of them are protesting conditions in general, but many have gone further and are expressing volubly the feelings of a people which have for the most part been unvoiced. (Young Chicanos as they reach maturity are saying things their parents may sometimes publicly deplore, but silently rejoice in.) The Chicano Press Association now coordinates the efforts of some twelve newspapers in the Southwestern states, Illinois and Wisconsin. New writers, artists and organizers have cropped up out of nowhere, it seems. All of this indicates that Chicanos have undoubtedly advanced the recognition and acceptance of Mexican American cultural values in the United States.

But an element of cynicism has accompanied Chicano idealism. Often more confidence is placed in confrontations per se than in working through normal channels, simply because confrontations have produced better and quicker results. In one college after an-

other, for example, deans and departments have agreed to offer new, more relevant courses only after direct confrontation by Chicanos. It is a tragedy that earlier reformers were rebuffed in their efforts to obtain through normal give-and-take what Chicanos have quickly gained by nonnegotiable demands. Furthermore, many Chicanos have found it difficult to cope with and accept their apparent success in certain areas. In short, a cult of confrontation for confrontation's sake has come into being among the young and the young at heart.

Many older Mexican Americans deplore Chicano tactics and ideas, and only gradually are the two generations coming to terms in order to serve common goals. What appears to be racism-in-reverse alarms some and embarrasses other Mexican Americans who are trying to "get lost" in the American crowd. Some Anglos, trying to take advantage of this situation, have once again stepped in to exploit internal divisions. Others are trying to listen to what the young Mexican Americans are saying, and to help them gain desirable objectives. But, however one looks at it, Chicanos at the present time are catalysts and a creative minority.

Mexican Americans have various options open to them that fall between the two extremes; these are embodied by a Cesar Chavez at one end and a Reies Tijerina at the other. Since the fall of 1965, the National Farm Workers Association has been trying, through established legal procedures and with a fervent commitment to non-violence, to gain those rights for farm workers that are now enjoyed by industrial workers in America. Against all odds, against every legal strategy and in the face of outright violence and abuse of authority, Chavez has led a movement for social justice that has produced repercussions around the world.

Though farm workers are still discriminated against in labor laws, Chavez has gained wide support for his cause, due to his law-abiding and peaceful methods. He has been quoted as saying, "I am convinced that the truest act of courage, the strongest act of manliness, is to sacrifice ourselves for others in a totally non-violent

struggle for justice. To be a man is to suffer for others. God help us to be men."

An evangelical preacher, Reies Tijerina also believes that God is on his side. But he uses different methods. Tijerina wants to take back—by force if necessary—the millions of acres "stolen" from Mexican Americans by "Uncle Sam, the greatest criminal of all times." He has proposed the formation of a group of city-states (along Hispanic lines) to govern vast stretches of the Southwest. This movement of the Alianza Federal in New Mexico has caused shudders across the nation. To date, Tijerina has eluded conviction for any of the serious crimes with which he has been charged. But his life, like that of Chavez, has been threatened many times.

Labor leaders and other militant figures like Corky Gonzales in Colorado as well as scholars and activists like Ernesto Galarza and Bert Corona, have supported the cause advanced by Tijerina. Even Chavez himself has lent support, for the cause is basically the same: justice for Mexican Americans.

The Chicano generation has not reached a consensus on these questions nor has it charted a course. The heat and furor it has raised will certainly shed more light on the situation if there is time available to sort out the good from the bad. In some respects, *la causa* (i.e., Mexican American claims for justice) is akin to a symphony orchestra with many instruments and players who are not all playing the same musical score.

Professor Ralph Guzman has rightly said that what the young militants achieve will depend heavily upon the reaction to their demands by Anglo Americans, the majority group. If Mexican Americans can gain reforms through established channels, the energies of the Chicanos will flow along those channels. The tragedy that looms over us all, however, is the possibility that the majority will try to suppress the militants rather than address itself to the problem of bringing about change quickly enough to convince the Chicanos that the "system" *can* be made to work for them, too.

The formation of Mexican American student groups to advance

their objectives is a new development within the Chicano movement. Various groups, especially UMAS (United Mexican American Students) now have chapters in many colleges and universities, as well as in some high schools in California. These groups try to work within established channels to help themselves and younger students gain greater benefits from education. They apply pressure on both Anglo officials and middle-aged Mexican Americans who are often not very militant.

An interesting and vital aspect of the Chicano movement is the support it has gained not only from Negroes, but from an ever-increasing number of Anglos who can see the injustices to which the Chicanos point. This was clearly evident in the historic "walk-outs" of about 2,000 Mexican American high school students in the Los Angeles city schools in the spring of 1968.

"Where are you going?" might well be asked today of Anglos, rather than of Chicanos. Indeed, Chicanos have brought America "to court." They have embarrassed religious leadership, politicians, social workers, government officials and particularly educators by revealing injustices and hypocrisies which can no longer be defended. The charges are not new, nor has a complete solution been found. Yet certainly more progress has been made and greater opportunities for achievement by Mexican Americans exist than many of the Chicano generation are either cognizant of or willing to admit. Nonetheless, for all of its youthful peccadillos, the Chicano generation is essentially correct in challenging America to practice more fully what it has preached for so long. And those in the community, public education and government who are similarly committed find it good as well as refreshing to work with Chicanos.

Meanwhile, both the old and new civic educational groups are rising up to help move social change in a desirable direction. Chief among the newer groups is the Southwest Council of *La Raza* (assisted by the Ford Foundation), which provides assistance to grass-roots groups wishing to become more effectively involved in civic affairs, and promotes research and publications directed to-

ward helping the Mexican American. Figures such as Dr. Ernesto Galarza, Julian Samora and Herman E. Gallegos (Executive Director), all members of *La Raza,* remind young Chicanos that there are other options open to them besides out-and-out confrontation.

Minorities still pose a riddle for America; the melting pot has not worked as well as many have supposed. Mexican Americans today are asking whether or not true Americanism includes respect for and acceptance of different languages, different customs and the adherence to the principles of individual freedom that underlie our Constitution. In any event, whether Mexican Americans ultimately choose assimilation or biculturalism, they are without any question loyal citizens of the United States of America.

Quo vadis America?

A Guide to Further Reading

The following list of works is representative of the major source books in the field. It is a basic collection of readily available material for the student or institution that is concerned with the Mexican American.

Clark, Margaret. *Health in the Mexican American Culture.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959.
This book deals with the treatment of health problems in a typical Mexican American *colonia.*

Galarza, Ernesto. *Merchants of Labor: The Mexican Bracero Story.* Santa Barbara: McNally & Loftin, 1964 (Paperback).
An authoritative and detailed study of the role of the *bracero* in the multi-million dollar agricultural industry in the Southwest. Good notes and comprehensive data.

Galarza, Ernesto; Gallegos, Herman; Samora, Julian. *Mexican Americans in the Southwest.* Santa Barbara: McNally & Loftin, Publishers, 1970. Studies the evolution of the Mexican American communities in

Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico and Texas since 1900. Describes the survival of the Mexican American's underlying cultural heritage. Tables. Illustrated.

Grebler, Leo. *The Mexican Americans.* New York: The Free Press, 1969.

This comprehensive study of Mexican American life presents a rounded picture of Mexican Americans in terms of their political, social and religious affiliations, their economic and occupational status, and their family life and language. The author views these people as a self-contained ethnic minority within the broader American scene.

Heller, Celia S. *Mexican American Youth: Forgotten Youth at the Crossroads.* New York: Random House, 1966 (Paperback).

A study of Mexican American youth along classical sociological lines. Good notes and bibliography.

Hernandez, Luis F. *A Forgotten American.* (Pamphlet), New York: Anti-Defamation League, 1969.

A resource unit for teachers on the historical-sociological background of the Mexican American community. Offers special guidelines for teaching the Mexican American; lists a bibliography of recommended readings.

Herschel, Manuel T. *Spanish-Speaking Children of the Southwest: Their Education and Public Welfare.* Austin: University of Texas, 1965.

The best study to date on the general educational problems of the Mexican American. Excellent notes and bibliography.

Landes, Ruth. *Latin-Americans of the Southwest.* New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965.

An interesting effort to provide an 8th grade supplementary text for California public schools. Generally criticized by Mexican American educators, it should be examined nonetheless.

McWilliams, Carey. *Brothers Under the Skin.* New York: Little Brown & Co., 1942 (Paperback).

A good picture of Mexican Americans which treats them as one of the major minority groups in the United States.

McWilliams, Carey. *North From Mexico.* New York: Lippincott, 1948.

The best history in one volume of the collision of two civilizations in the Southwest. The general tone is critical of U.S. methods of dealing with "minorities" down to mid-20th century. Excellent notes and bibliography.

Madsen, William. *The Mexican Americans of South Texas.* New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1964.

A very penetrating sociological analysis of Mexican American life in Texas which also has validity for most of the Southwest, especially the rural areas.

Milne, Jean. *Fiesta Time in Latin America.* Los Angeles: Ward Ritchie press, 1965.

Holidays and related customs of Mexico are included. This book is useful to teachers and to those who want background on Mexican American cultural roots.

Nava, Julian. *Mexican Americans: Past, Present, Future.* New York: American Book Co., 1969.

Comprehensive text on the history of the Mexican Americans and their prospects for the future. Addressed to public schools (grades 8 or higher), it is useful to the adult.

Paz, Octavio. *The Labyrinth of Solitude: Life and Thought in Mexico.* New York: Grove Press, 1961.

A very subjective, almost poetic analysis of the Mexican personality as a distinct and problematical phenomenon. Well translated from the Spanish.

Pitt, Leonard. *The Decline of the Californios.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966.

This social history of California from 1846-1890 highlights the initial encounter between the Anglo American and Hispano Mexican peoples. Documents important aspects of the elimination of the Californios from the positions of power and wealth that they enjoyed, and traces the start of systematic prejudice against Spanish-speaking peoples in the state.

Ramos, Manuel. *Profile of Man and Culture in Mexico.* Austin: University of Texas, 1962.

An interpretation of the historical forces molding the development of the Mexican national character. A broad humanistic approach by one of Mexico's most brilliant contemporary thinkers. Can be used by the general reader.

Robinson, Cecil. *With the Ears of Strangers: The Mexican in American Literature.* Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1963.

An excellent survey of the types of literature and literary materials which have served to condition the American public to Mexico. Good notes and bibliography.

Rubel, Arthur. *Across the Tracks.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 1966.

A study of Mexican American attitudes and values in a community in

the lower Rio Grande Valley. Based upon personal observations, it can be useful to the general reader as well as to the specialist.

Sanchez, George I. *Forgotten People: A Study of New Mexicans.* Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1940.

A basic work that presents many important issues as seen by a Mexican American scholar who is the current trail blazer in Mexican American studies.

Samora, Julian. *La Raza: Forgotten Americans.* Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966.

A valuable collection of essays by contemporary authorities on such topics as "History, Culture, and Education," "The Role of the Christian Church" and "Leadership and Politics."

Taylor, Paul S. *An American-Mexican Frontier: Nueces County, Texas.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1934.

A regional study, but one that also has use for other areas.